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AUTHOR Setliff, Rebecca J.; Taft, Lori A.
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ABSTRACT

The Language and Culture Institute of the University of Pittsburgh has developed a 13-week program of pre-assignment training for engineers given corporate assignments in Japan. The Institute offers the corporations three components in this intensive seminar: program administration, language training, and culture training. The program administration component includes program coordination (maintaining contact with participants, overseeing daily operations of the teaching staff, coordinating cultural component activities, trouble-shooting, and serving as liaison with the corporation) and budget preparation. The goal of the language training is to help students achieve Japanese language proficiency equivalent to that of one to four years of college instruction. The culture orientation is intended to develop sensitivity to the new culture's customs and philosophies. Each seminar is designed for a specific group and is budgeted, planned, and evaluated separately. While each program presents its own set of challenges and complications, a general structure for planning and budget development is now in place, and evaluation measures are being researched. (MSE)

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INTENSIVE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR JAPAN

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Dr. Rebecca J. Setliff and Dr. Lori A. Taft

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1. Introduction.

The Language and Culture Institute of the University of Pittsburgh was founded in 1974. Its goal is to assist people of different nations to develop linguistic skills and cultural sensitivity in order to operate effectively in other countries. In the University context, the Institute serves as a coordinating and administrative body, working with other units of the University preparating innovative and finely focused programs. As part of this effort we plan and implement programs on an *ad hoc* basis in a format which ranges from one- to three-day seminars to courses of several weeks' duration.

2. Intensive Language and Culture Program for Japan: History and Rationale.

The program we describe here was originally developed in 1983 on request by the Asia-Pacific Human Resources group of Westinghouse Electric Corporation. As part of a licensing agreement between Westinghouse and Mitsubishi Electric Company, an engineer exchange was begun so that selected engineers from each company could spend a one-year assignment at an appropriate facility in the foreign country. In response to the request, the LCI developed a thirteen-week Intensive Language and Culture Orientation program for these engineers.

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The rationale for this program is threefold. First, Westinghouse believes that pre-assignment training will be rather like preventive maintenance. If the engineers receive the orientation it is more likely that they will avoid cultural pitfalls which would prevent them from being effective ambassadors for the company. Second, an orientation program will help to head off that demon "culture shock" which has been shown to interfere with an individual's success abroad. As we know, cultural differences and unreasonable expectations can have a profoundly negative effect on the expatriate's performance. Third, the Language and Culture Institute believes that international understanding must begin with individuals. Thus, we are striving to provide an educational format for learning about other countries and cultures.

By describing the structure of this particular program, we hope to illustrate one way of approaching the general problem of providing training for cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity.

3. Structure of the Program.

The three major components of this Intensive Seminar are program administration, language training, and culture training. We will discuss each in turn.

3.1. Administration.

The program is administered by the Language and Culture Institute. Our administrative staff consists of a Director, an Assistant Director, and a Coordinator of Special Projects. Two major tasks which fall directly under the category of administration are program coordination and budget preparation. The program coordination involves maintaining contact with the participants from beginning to finish of the program, overseeing the daily operations of the teaching staff, coordinating the cultural component activities, "trouble-shooting", and

serving as liaison between the Institute and the Corporation.

The budget is prepared by the Assistant Director of the Institute. Once prepared, it is circulated among the administrative staff, and after review, submitted to the Corporation for approval. We will discuss the budgeting process in more detail after we have discussed the main training components in the program.

3.2. Language Training.

The language training component is administered by the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at the University of Pittsburgh. The primary goal is for the participants to achieve a level of proficiency in Japanese equivalent to that resulting from one year of language instruction in a typical university program. The daily schedule consists of four hours of language instruction plus one hour listening to tapes specially designed for use with the text (E. Jorden, *Beginning Japanese*, Yale University Press, 1963). Three of the four language class hours are spent on oral drill with the Japanese instructors, strictly in Japanese. The fourth hour is with a faculty member from the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures. This discussion, in English, focuses on language structure and use, and on areas of contrast between the two cultures.

The Japanese instructors are native speakers of Japanese, who are graduate students in Linguistics or East Asian Languages and Literatures. Under the faculty member's supervision, they provide the intensive drill and reinforcement in their native Japanese without recourse to English. The classes are held in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, providing easy and frequent contact with the faculty member involved in the program. This is important, since it allows the students to make specific requests if they wish some part of the program to receive greater emphasis or if they have a problem, academic or otherwise. This location is also convenient since the engineers often see their instructors and other native speakers of Japanese and engage in informal Japanese conversation outside

of the classroom. This is a valuable way to practice their newly acquired skills.

3.3. Culture Orientation.

The culture orientation portion of the program is administered by the Language and Culture Institute. The goal of this part of the Intensive Seminar is to help the students develop sensitivity to the customs and philosophies of a new culture. Through these efforts, we hope they can avoid negative evaluation of the culture and can participate with greater understanding. Cultural orientation, therefore, is designed to provide basic facts about everyday life in present-day Japan and to give an awareness of cultural differences which will facilitate a smooth transition into the new society.

To accomplish this goal, the LCI arranges a program of instruction in Japanese culture. Guest lecturers from the business and academic communities of Pittsburgh meet with the students one or two times each week to discuss various aspects of Japanese society in their respective areas of expertise. For example, our lecture series have included speakers from the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, Duquesne University, The Japan Society, National Steel, and Mitsubishi Electric Company. Some of these discussions focus on the typical routines of Japanese families, thus providing the students with some measure of familiarity with day-to-day living in Japan. Other discussions focus on Japanese history and geography. Still others concern Japanese businesses, both in terms of their historical development and in terms of their present position in the world economy. We usually arrange luncheons or dinners with the speakers so that the engineers can extend the discussion time and bring up issues relevant to their own interests and concerns.

A second part of the cultural orientation consists of films which are shown one or two times per week. These films concern the art, music, theatre, and family life in Japan. The films often provide the impetus for questions which can be directed to the instructors or lecturers. A complete list of the films and their topics is given in Figure 1.

At the conclusion of the thirteen weeks of instruction and orientation, we hold a farewell dinner to honor the participants in the Intensive Seminar. We extend invitations to all who have been involved in the seminar, and we also invite representatives from the Asia-South Pacific Human Resources Division of Westinghouse and from Mitsubishi Electric Company. The engineers are given certificates of completion and they each give a short prepared speech in Japanese. This first experience with speaking publicly in Japanese is deemed by the engineers themselves to be a very valuable experience.

3.4. Budget.

Budgeting for this program is divided into three major areas: personnel costs, administrative costs, and University mandated costs. To give you a clearer idea of the budgeting process, we briefly explain each of these areas, which are outlined in Figure 2.

Under personnel we include instructors for the language component and lecturers for the cultural component. We charge an hourly rate for the language instruction and an honorarium for each of the lecturers. Both of these figures may vary depending on the level of expertise of the individuals involved, and also depending on the currently accepted rates for these services.

Budgeting for administrative costs is a two-step process. First, we calculate the cost of materials, supplies, travel, and meal expenses as appropriate. Next, to determine the charges for the administrative staff, we take 15 per cent of these costs plus the personnel costs. These two steps give us the total administrative cost. For the 13-week engineer exchange program, 15 per cent has proven to be an accurate way to calculate the charges for the administrative staff time.

University mandated costs include fringe benefits, which range from 26.5 per cent to 32 per cent, and indirect costs which may range from 10 per cent to 50 per cent for sponsored programs in a University setting. The entire budgeting process is as follows: two to three

months before the program begins we present a tentative budget to Westinghouse for approval. An invoice letter is sent once the program is underway. Occasionally the participants make specific requests which incur additional costs. In such a case we call Westinghouse and, if approval is granted, we write an additional invoice or, if appropriate, the individuals take care of the costs themselves and then submit expense reports directly to the company for reimbursement.

4. Evaluation Process.

In programs such as this, in which the participants move at their own pace and which are designed on an ad hoc basis, evaluation is a difficult task. To assess the value of the orientation and training would mean that we should have some pre- and post-training performance measurement. For the language instruction this is certainly possible; since most of the engineers come to our program with little or no Japanese, improvement is practically guaranteed. In our 1988 program we intend to give a language skills test at the end of the thirteen weeks. We also typically schedule an exit interview before departure so that participants can have the opportunity to discuss their opinions about the program from the pre-assignment point of view. A sampling of the comments we have received during these exit interviews suggests that the engineers find it extremely beneficial to be required to use only Japanese with their instructors, even outside of class, and that in general the staff "creates an environment which is highly conducive to learning". Of course, we must keep in mind that motivation is an important factor in language learning, and that the engineers are generally highly motivated to learn Japanese before their foreign assignment.

There are issues, however, which are not so clearly measurable and which must be discussed after the foreign experience: Did the training help provide a smooth transition between cultures? If so, how? How well were the engineers able to use the language to accomplish routine tasks upon their arrival? Did the training help alleviate the culture

shock syndrome? If so, how? Could the same amount of value have been garnered with a shorter program? On the other hand, would a longer program have been much better?

The problems of making such qualitative assessments are well-known to trainers and other Human Resource Development professionals. Among the problems are the following. First, we are dealing with highly subjective responses which are in themselves difficult to measure. Second, we are looking at individuals who differ in many ways, and whose experiences will vary in other ways not affected by their pre-assignment training. Third, it is difficult to demonstrate how the participant's experience might have been different had he not had the training, even if we believe it indeed would have been. Finally, the benefits of training are often not directly measurable in terms of increased productivity, but instead affect performance in more subtle ways.

These factors have conspired to make the evaluation of training programs elusive. Yet, we feel it is essential to begin developing tools which give us a variety of types of information on the success of our language and culture orientation programs. As a first step, we have begun to collect information from our alumni. We developed a questionnaire which we distributed to 20 participants of the engineer exchange program. At this time, we have not received all of the questionnaires back, but the comments thus far have been very positive. Once we have received more information we hope to refine our measurement tool so that we can develop a uniform approach to evaluating all of our orientation programs.

5. Conclusion.

In this brief presentation we have tried to give a glimpse of the major considerations in setting up a language and culture orientation program. Of course, any particular program may have special needs which we have not been able to address through this one case study. For example, many of our programs involve foreign businessmen and their families coming to the U.S. For this type of program, both the language component and the culture component are

"in context", and the training need not be limited to classroom experiences and discussion groups. In this case, we often include "field trips" around Pittsburgh, introducing the student to local attractions such as museums, concerts, and parks in Pittsburgh. We often combine such trips with a meal at a restaurant or in an American home, in order to increase opportunities for discussion. Clients who bring their families to Pittsburgh have special needs, which we make every effort to address. This often involves placing the children in schools or day care centers, finding medical care, identifying extracurricular activities for the children. When possible, we try to meet with at least one parent before the arrival of the family, to assess their needs and to pave the way for a successful transition once the family arrives.

The engineer exchange program described here is the longest program we coordinate. Most of our programs run from one day to a few weeks' duration. The challenges of implementing such short-term programs are even greater than what is required for the 13-week program. Typically, we are asked to make a proposal for a program only weeks before it is to begin. We are often faced with the need to hire teachers on a short-term basis and on short notice. Because of our affiliation with the English Language Institute at the University of Pittsburgh, this is usually feasible but may at times be problematic. Often, our staff members will do some or all of the teaching, where it involves English; but this is contingent upon other demands placed on the staff member.

Another problem is that we often do not have a clear idea of the client's language proficiency before his or her arrival. This usually means that the first day of class is spent on language testing, and the instructors must decide within the first day or two which level, and thus what materials, will be best suited for this student. Again, our affiliation with the English Language Institute gives us great flexibility in choosing materials tailored to the client's needs.

Still another administrative concern for short-term programs is classroom space. These

short, intensive programs are difficult to house because University space is at a premium and one must request it far in advance. However, the advantage to being associated with the University is that we have the potential for running several programs at once, by making use of a variety of classroom settings when they are available.

Budgeting for these short programs, as with the other programs, involves figuring a cost for the administrative staff. As noted above, we calculate 15 per cent of the personnel and administrative costs, and this is our charage for the non-teaching staff time. For shorter programs, this may not be an accurate figure, since short programs often require as much coordination as longer programs. We are currently examining this issue to determine a more accurate formula for our shorter programs.

Thus, each program presents its own set of challenges and complications. Nonetheless, we have developed a general structure for program planning and budget development which we can apply to all programs, as a first step. Even though we have not yet established clear evaluation measures for our programs, one visible sign of our success is the continued corporate interest in the language and culture orientation programs we provide.

As participants at this conference, we all recognize that the nations and people of the world must rely on one another more and more. Since the inception of the Language and Culture Institute more than ten years ago, we have worked to help people understand this reliance. One of the first steps is the development of cross-cultural sensitivity. We hope that we have contributed to the body of knowledge that will help establish and promote the transition from an ethnocentric attitude to a more global one.

Language and Culture Institute
2831 Cathedral of Learning
Department of Linguistics
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Film:	Topic:
Tokyo: The World's Safest City	Tokyo as a city of little crime–why this is so.
Full Moon Lunch	A Japanese family and its business
The National Treasures of Japan	A portrayal of the people who preserve the cultural roots of Japan
Contemporary Japanese Women: A Closer Look	The changing roles of women in contemporary Japanese society
Shinto	A look at the place of religion on Japan
Noh Drama	A portrayal of excerpts from Noh plays
Bunraku	The place of the theatre in Japanese society
Kyoto	One family's life in Japan with particular emphasis on older people
Rashomon (feature length)	A classic film portraying four different perspectives of one incident
Yojimbo (feature length)	A classic film portraying a Samurai's influence in a troubled town
Tokyo Story	A close look at the relationships in a Japanese family

Figure 1. Films Used in Culture Training Component.

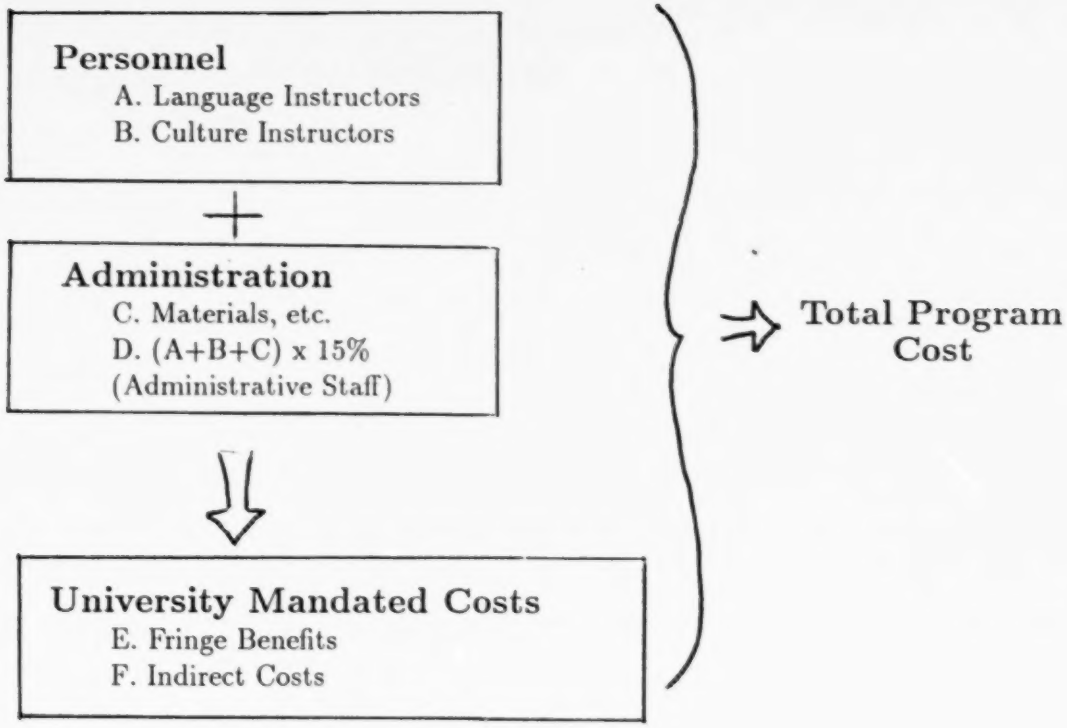

Figure 2. Budgeting Process for Intensive Seminar on Japan.